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THE DUE METHOD OF
KEEPING THE SABBATH,
AND ITS REWARD.

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A
S E R M O N,

PREACHED AT THE
PARISH CHURCH OF STROUD,
GLOUCESTERSHIRE,
ON THE
DAY OF THANKSGIVING.
JULY 29, 1784.

BY THE
REV. W. ELLIS, K
CURATE OF STROUD,
AND CHAPLAIN TO THE RIGHT HON. LORD DUCIE.

THE PROFITS OF THIS SERMON ARE APPROPRIATED
TO THE SUPPORT OF THE SUNDAY SCHOOLS
ESTABLISHED IN THE PARISH OF STROUD.

TO WHICH ARE ANNEXED,
RULES FOR THE MANAGEMENT
OF THE
ABOVEMENTIONED SCHOOLS.

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THE DUTY OF

THE CHURCH

AND THE STATE

S E R M O N

PREACHED AT THE

PARISH CHURCH OF ST. JOHN

ON SUNDAY

DAY OF THANKSGIVING

JUNE 1866

BY

REV. W. L. GILBERT

OF THE

CHURCH OF THE HOLY TRINITY

THE CHURCH OF THE HOLY TRINITY

TO THE CHURCH OF THE HOLY TRINITY

THE CHURCH OF THE HOLY TRINITY

TO THE CHURCH OF THE HOLY TRINITY

NOTES FOR THE CHURCH OF THE HOLY TRINITY

OF THE

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OF THE

TO THE
INHABITANTS.
OF THE
PARISH OF STROUD.

AS you were pleased to hear the following *SERMON* when preached with respectful attention, and several of you desired it might be printed, it is now dedicated to you, with earnest prayer, that *GOD* will bless whatever is consonant to his will in it, to the edification of yourselves, your families, and servants.

I am, my worthy Friends,

Your respectful, affectionate,

And humble servant,

W. ELLIS.

E R R A T A.

Title page, after the name of the Author, *read* M. A.

Page 42, line 19, *for* blank *read* black.

Page 43, line 19, *for* second evening, *read* second Sunday evening.

Page 46, line 10, *for* county *read* country.

TABLE

OF THE

PROGRESS OF THE
RESEARCHES OF THE
COMMISSIONERS OF THE
LAND OFFICE

Isaiah, chap. lviii. ver. 13 and 14.

If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words;—then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth; and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy Father: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.

THE Prophet seems in this chapter to be roused by a new portion of the Divine influence, to censure with the boldest freedom and the keenest severity, that want of sincere and zealous piety which was found in the house of Jacob, notwithstanding the shew of decency and regularity which remained among them; and in which they flattered themselves, they had done enough to secure the Divine favour; tho' clouds

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of

of misfortune, the marks of God's displeasure, still surrounded them.

In order to an effectual reformation, he re-proves their abuse, and rectifies their notion, of those great instruments of holiness, Fasts and Sabbaths: to the due use of which, he declares himself authorized from *the mouth of the Lord*, to invite and encourage, by numerous promises of a most copious and comfortable import.

How properly these two solemnities are classed together by the Prophet, might be easily shewn by a comparative view, in which would it appear that they concur in accomplishing the true Israelites, the servants of God, in whom he will delight, and upon whom he will shower down the promised blessings. For as a day of *fasting* is a solemn time for the establishment of purposes and methods to expel whatever is vicious out of the soul; so is the *Sabbath* for increasing and confirming habits of godliness and virtue in it. As the one is *a day for a man to afflict his soul*, by *cutting off* and destroying * *the thorn and*

* Ch. lv. ver. 48.

the briar, every noxious production of sin, every odious temper of the natural man; so is the other a day for a man to *delight himself in the Lord*, by planting, nurturing, and training *the myrtle and the fir-tree*, every amiable and virtuous affection of the renewed mind, which tends to make the soul truly *the garden of the Lord*. And by the due use of both, shall * *every plant which our heavenly Father hath not planted, be rooted up*, and every thing be done to the soil of the heart, which shall make it that *good ground*, wherein *the seed* of eternal life will *spring up*, and bear fruit an hundred-fold †.

Some of my auditors may perhaps think, that a discourse on the duty of the *Sabbath*, is not very proper for a day of *thanksgiving*; and that the very mention of *fasting* is altogether foreign to its purpose. But if we consider the peace lately concluded (tho' a just occasion of thankfulness to the Divine sparing mercy, yet) as no matter of triumph, but rather of mortification;—it may be no ill use of this day's solem-

* Matth. xv. 13.

† Matth. xiii. 8.

nity, seriously to turn our thoughts to the causes productive of such a peace, and the means by which the calamities of the late war might have been prevented.

Here I would not be understood as intending to discuss the conduct of our superiors who directed the war, or of those who negotiated the peace. I do not mean to insinuate in any degree, whether the peace is, or is not, the best that political wisdom could procure for us. I shall have an eye to causes of another kind; and suppose that it is a better peace than we deserved, and the best, that *the judge of all the earth*, the supreme disposer of all events, would permit us to make.

When a nation has been visited *year after year*, with a succession of disasters, terminating in a peace which has stripped it of much honour and many territories, and subjected it to a grievous (tho' necessary) burden of taxes; every serious man will conclude (like David in a somewhat similar case *) *it is for some crying sin*, unre-

* 2 Sam. xxi. 1.

pented of and unforfaken. Upon the present occafion however, we need not *enquire of the Lord*, as David did, what the *moft* loudly crying fin of this nation has of late years been; every man's obfervation, or confcience, may at once inform him,—it is---*the profanation of the Sabbath*.

And would to God, that this our nation had confidered this fermen of the Prophet as delivered to them, as well as to the houfe of Jacob! That they had *read, marked, learned, and inwardly digefted* it! (for it made a part of our worfhip on every one of our public fafts during the late war) *then fhould we have called, and the Lord would have answered; then fhould we have cried, for fuccefs in war, for an honourable and permanent peace, for all the bleffings we wanted, and he would have faid, 'Here I am, ready to hear, and grant all your petitions.'**

But I propofe to confider at prefent, only the latter part of the Prophet's fermen; in which

* Ifaiah lviii. ver 9.

he shews,---first, how the Sabbath is to be duly kept;---and secondly, what shall be the reward of thus keeping it.

The observance of the Sabbath, must ever have been, and ever will be (among those to whom a revelation has been vouchsafed) one of the great characteristics which constitute the difference between people of some real religion, and people of no religion at all. Indeed this Prophet in another place,* seems to comprehend the whole of our duty towards God and towards our neighbour, when he says, *Blessed is the man that doeth this, and the son of man that layeth hold on it; that keepeth the Sabbath from polluting it, and keepeth his hand from doing any evil.* And tho' the appointment of the Sabbath was positive, and by the revealed command of God, yet the use and design of it is highly moral, tending to the perfection of our souls and of their happiness.

That the wise and good Creator of all things might be remembered, adored, and be loved by

* Chap. lvi. ver. 2.

all his rational creatures upon earth, it was necessary that there should be fixed returns of proper seasons when this might be done. And agreeable to the wisdom and goodness of the Creator was the appointment of one day in seven for this purpose. He who *knew our frame, and whereof we are made*, knew that the soul would grow brutish and sensual, if not frequently withdrawn from the pursuits of its grosser companion, taught to recollect its affinity to God, and to aspire after its own better portion in the enjoyment of himself; and therefore calls it at certain periods to soar on the wings of Divine contemplation: yet *remembering* at the same time that our bodies *are but dust*, he mildly allows the rational soul to contrive for the preservation of its helpless partner; and considering that *the corruptible body presseth down the soul*, he calls us not too often nor too long, *to muse on heavenly things*. Thus he preserves the fire of the soul from being extinguished by the earth of the body, and the body from being consumed by the ardour of the soul.

These

These reasons for the appointment of the Sabbath must have existed ever since the first existence of man; and therefore we may suppose the observance of it began at the same time. Accordingly Moses tells us, that when the Creator rested from his work on the 7th day, *he blessed that day and sanctified it*;* i. e. he set apart every return of it for his creatures to contemplate his works and adore their author.

But *Christians* have new and additional motives to this duty of sanctifying the Sabbath. They have nobler benefits to meditate upon than were known to the world before; they have a *new* as well as an *old Creation* to celebrate; not only the formation, but the redemption of man to rejoice in; not only a first but also a second birth-day to keep, when they were *begotten again to a lively hope of immortality by the resurrection of Christ from the dead*.†

And these superior benefits, that they might make a deeper impression on our minds, have

* Gen. ii. 3.

† 1 Pet. i. 3.

occasioned

occasioned an alteration of the day on which the Sabbath is to be kept. The Son of God, (by whom God at first made the worlds) when he condescended to become *the Son of Man*, that he might *create us anew to good works*, asserted himself to be *Lord of the Sabbath*, and declared himself to be *the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead*. He having therefore power to change the day, we may conclude that his disciples upon his authority, and not without it, observed the *first* instead of the *seventh* day of the week, in commemoration of the glorious work which he had then finished upon earth. (On which account it seems likewise to have been called *the Lord's day*.) And that they had his sanction for so doing, appears from his blessing their assemblies on this day with his presence several times after his resurrection; and from the accomplishment of his great promise of the miraculous descent of the Holy Ghost, when they were met together after his ascension, on a most remarkable return of the same day, *that* on which fell the feast of Pentecost, which as

the learned observe was the day on which God delivered the law from Mount Sinai ; and *now* that also on which the gospel was published with such glorious power as would secure its success in the world.

Where two or three are gathered together in his name, there our Lord promises still *to be with them.* The Sabbath therefore gives Christians the best opportunity of enjoying this gracious and important promise *to the end of the world.*

Having premised these general remarks upon the Sabbath, I proceed to consider the particular rules which the Prophet gives us for the due observance of it.

First, he says we must *turn our foot from the Sabbath.* Needless journeys, either for business or pleasure, must not be taken on the Sabbath. They are considered as trampling on the ordinance of God ; they shew an open contempt of his name and authority ; in the most direct manner

ner they frustrate the intention of the Sabbath. For if the body be travelling from place to place, thro' a variety of scenes or companies, how can the soul be seriously fixed in attention to God and his worship? stillness and rest of the body are necessary, that the soul may not be interrupted* in hearing the *voice* of Divine instruction. If our *feet* stand not in the house of God, how can our *bodies* be there *presented* to him in that *service* which is so reasonably due to him? when the feet wander abroad in forbidden paths, the thoughts, like the *eyes* of Solomon's *fool*, will be *in the ends of the earth*; dispersed as far as possible from the proper subject of the day. It has been questioned what was a *Sabbath-day's journey* among the Jews; but if we would know what it should be among Christians, I apprehend, it is that, and that only, whether long or short, which cannot be set aside without great inconvenience.

* Proverbs xvii. 24.

But if the *foot* must be *kept* from the path of *business*, much more from that of *pleasure* at this sacred season. Therefore the Prophet adds, *from doing thy pleasure on my holy day*. The foot of levity is still more *impudent* than that of labour. To let our feet run to the scene of mirth or gaiety, when *the Lord of the whole earth* commands us to his *solemn assembly*, is, like the profane sons of Eli, *to kick* at the appointment of God. And whether it be our own feet, or the feet of others, of men or of beasts, that carry us to our pleasure, the guilt is still the same; or rather, the more feet we employ to do our pleasure to the neglect of God's pleasure, the more aggravated is our abuse of God's holy day. His mercy had in view the comfort of servants, and even of brutes, in this institution; *that thy servant and thy cattle* (says he) *may rest, as well as thou*.

What still heightens this way of abusing the Sabbath is, when it is practised by those whom God has blessed with wealth, and leisure to enjoy

joy abundant recreation at any other time. And shall not the more *wanton* and *wilful* offenders meet with accumulated vengeance?—but they seem as if they would flee from the lightening of Divine reproofs by the swiftness of their horses, and drown the thunder of Divine threatnings by the *rattling* of their *chariots*.

If there are any present who offend in this point, they perhaps affect to hear me now with contempt; but if they persist thus proudly to dishonour God upon *his* day, there will come *a day when the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low; and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day.**

In a word, they who will not, out of reverence to God, *turn away their foot from abusing his Sabbath*, whether by business or pleasure, might as well turn their backs at once upon him.---But we must not only abstain from polluting the Sabbath by the fore-mentioned ways; we must not

* Isaiah ii. 17.

negatively and silently keep it; we must openly profess our reverence for it, and satisfaction in it, we must *call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, and honourable.*

We must never be ashamed of declaring ourselves on *God's side*, amidst a profane generation. Profession is a necessary mark, tho' not an infallible evidence that we belong to God. While others say, *what a weariness is it?* we should own that we *take delight in approaching unto God*; our whole conversation must declare our willingness and gladness to spend this day to the honour of God, and the advantage of our souls. We must assert, whatever others say, that the day is sacred, *the holy of the Lord*, and not to be encroached upon by our own concerns; and resolve (whatever others do) that *as for us and our houses, we will serve the Lord* upon it. We are to *call it an honourable day*; we must esteem ourselves highly honoured in having a day appointed, when God will accept of the honour we endeavour

endeavour to pay him; when *the rich and poor meet together* in his house, and the Lord vouchsafes to acknowledge himself *the maker, preserver and saviour of them all*; when the King of Heaven gives public audience to the *lowest*, as well as to the *highest* of his subjects. This surely is a most *honourable* day; and let us ever call it so, as we hope for the favour of God.

We may indeed go so far as to *take a delight in approaching unto God* in outward things, without being able to *delight ourselves in God* himself; we may *delight to know his ways*, and yet not be so *happy* as to delight in *doing* them; we may seem to be, and fancy ourselves to be *a nation that do righteousness, and forsake not the ordinances of our God.** So did the house of Jacob; and so fast asleep were they in this self-flattering dream, that God saw it necessary to send his prophet to them to *cry aloud, and spare not, but lift up his like a trumpet*, to awake them thoroughly, in

* Ver. 2.

order to *shew them their transgressions and their sins.**

Accordingly the prophet here proceeds, *and shalt honour him; i. e. really, earnestly, and completely; not in profession and appearance only.*

And to shew how strictly and solemnly God expects us to honour him upon his holy day, the prophet insists on three particular prohibitions, by which we are altogether prevented from living to ourselves, to our own honour, profit, or pleasure, at this time; *not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words.*

And this negative manner of speaking, strongly implies a positive obligation to the opposite duties; otherwise we cannot honour God in the way that he will approve and reward: *who so offereth me thanks and praise* (God himself tells

* Ver. 1.

us) *he honoureth me; and to him that ordereth his conversation aright, will I shew the salvation of God.** As we are *not to do our own ways, nor find our own pleasure, nor speak our own words,* we must practise, delight in, and discourse of, *his ways, the things that please him; we must meditate upon his ways of dealing with us, and on the ways that lead to his acceptance; otherwise we shall miss of happiness, and find, when it is too late, that our ways are not his ways, nor our thoughts his thoughts.†*

But *by not doing our own ways,* it is more expressly meant to restrain us from exercising our several occupations, or doing any secular business tending to profit or œconomy. And, indeed, 'tis impossible they should promote the honour of God, who have not faith enough to trust to his providence one day in seven; and whose minds are so distracted with worldly cares, that they cannot attend to the business of God's day.

* Ps. l. 23.

† Is. lv. 8.

It has been said by some pious persons, that they who duly honour God upon his day, prosper most in their worldly affairs. Whether this be always the case or not, it is most certainly and constantly true, that they who *do their own ways*, and not *the ways of God* upon his day, cannot prosper in their eternal interest. But that the last is least valued by many among us, is very evident from the sounding of scales and weights that may be heard from within the half-opened shops; the many bearers of burdens, and loaded horses that we meet in the high roads; the many persons we see in their working apparel, without the least sense of shame, or fear of rebuke, on the Lord's day.

Let those, who choose to do *their own ways* all the days of their life think, *what will ye do in the end thereof?* * *Ye shall eat the fruit of your own way, and be filled with your own devices.* †

Next, the prophet tells us, we must *honour God*, by *not finding our own pleasure* on his holy

* Jer. v. 31.

† Prov. i. 31.

day.

day. He had before restrained us from seeking it with *our feet* abroad; here he further restrains us from finding it at home, where it may be near at hand to find. And most highly reasonable is this restraint. He who gives us six days, to be spent chiefly in providing for our own moderate comfort, necessary convenience, and innocent pleasure, has a right to demand that the whole (if possible) of the seventh should be devoted to his pleasure. God has not restrained us from our honest occupations that we may spend his day of rest in indolence or levity. Vacancy of mind is not the end of this rest; tho' it is one of the means to be used towards its end. The mind is to be emptied of its "low-thoughted cares," and poor carnal amusements, that it may be *filled with the knowledge of the Lord*,* of his nature and his will, of his holiness, justice, and mercy; that we may be instructed in the manner, and acquire the habit of *well-pleasing him in all things*.

* Is. xi. 9.

Tho'

Tho' our own pleasure be of an innocent kind in itself, yet let us think, what a daring affront it must be to the Almighty God, to do it by choice upon *that* day which he calls *his* day, *his holy day*, which he has sanctified and separated from every profane or common purpose. But, I believe, it will generally be found, that when we choose to do our own pleasure on his holy day, tho' it may begin with what is innocent in itself, it does not end there. If we are careless in obeying God, we shall soon be careless in disobeying him; if we incline to those who neglect to honour him, we are in great danger of going over to those, who openly dishonour him: and they must be ignorant of Satan's devices, who suppose it not easy for him to prevail upon those who *lightly esteem* God, to *despise* him also.

And here it is grievous to think, how many are the persons among us, who, while they neglect to *honour* God in public, are *finding their own* low brutish *pleasure*, in sleep, or mere senseless inactivity, at home; if not abroad in
the

the resorts of the drunkard. This charge falls heavy upon the common people. And this is one of the scandalous causes that our churches (in this manufacturing country) are so empty every Lord's day in the morning.---Another cause of it is, that many make it a constant custom to have a newly dressed or more plentiful repast on Sundays than on other days; and by this means many servants are kept at home, and otherwise prevented from a due observance of the Sabbath. *But the blame of this God will impute chiefly to the heads of families.*

In answer to this, some will plead, that every Sunday in the year is a festival: True, it is so; not for the regaling of the body, but of the soul. As the Christian religion is more spiritual and refined than the Jewish, and as we have more noble subjects to employ our thoughts upon, we have more need of leisure on the Sabbath for that purpose, than they had: and surely the miracle by which the manna gathered on the sixth day was increased and preserved for the Sabbath, was not intended for the instruction of
that

that age and generation alone. See (says Moses) *for that the Lord hath given you the Sabbath, he giveth you on the sixth day the bread of two days; bake, therefore, that ye will bake, and seethe that ye will seethe, and that which remaineth over, lay up for you until the morrow.**

• If any serious persons think I am extending the rule too far, I earnestly intreat them to bear in mind the following truths. The grand intention of the Sabbath is, that we may have the better opportunity of learning how to glorify and enjoy God for ever. Many things then may be *lawful* on this day, which may not be *expedient*: many things may be done upon an emergency, which would be criminal if done customarily: many things may be in themselves even virtuous and laudable, which, if done upon this day, will hinder the due improvement of it to its own nobler purposes. God would have us *choose the things that please him*, each in its proper time and place; and therefore what tends most directly to *his honour, on his holy day*.

* Exod. xvi. 23.

But

But if contrary to our proper choice, any *work of necessity*, or *labour of love* present itself, if there be any son or *daughter of Abraham*,* or of Adam, whom we can *unloose* from the *bonds* of their affliction, any beast to have its thirst allayed, or its life restored from jeopardy,---then we may understand that our gracious God would for that time *have mercy and not sacrifice*.†

In a word, let us with real sincerity of heart keep the spirit and design of the Sabbath in our view, and we shall not fall into either extreme, that of Jewish superstition, or modern profaneness.

Lastly, we must *honour* God, by *not speaking our own words* upon his holy day. This, tho' the last, is not the least difficult restraint which the Sabbath lays upon us. St. James tell us, *if any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able to bridle the whole body*.

Friendly society is not forbidden on this day; yet thence arises no small danger: for in com-

* Luke xiii. 16.

† Matt. xii. 7.

pany, the tongue must necessarily be often in motion; and if not guarded with great care, it will insensibly lead us to transgress this command. The tongue, when it utters the thoughts of the heart just as they arise, is the grand proclaimer of man's fallen and degenerate state. And as words beget similar thoughts, both in our own and other minds, and these are quickly born into words, if not prevented, they soon become a numerous race. As speech then is the birth of thought, all bad thoughts should be stifled in the womb of the mind; otherwise these *daughters of men* will soon corrupt the *sons of God*, those pure and heavenly thoughts, which are the offspring of the holy spirit.

Thus the *tongue*, if unwisely managed, may soon produce *a world of iniquity*; but if rightly used to the honour of God, it will be in truth *our glory*, and *the best member that we have*.

And shall not this distinguishing gift be consecrated to his service at least one seventh of our time? Now society may be made very subservient

vient to this end: for *they that fear the Lord, will speak often one to another,** especially on his day, of *his ways, his will, and his word.* And *let the word of Christ* (says the Apostle) *dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another;†* and *speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.* We ought to speak (and speak from the heart) the grateful sense we have of God's wise and kind institutions; of the methods of his providence, grace, and love, in the dispensations of creation, preservation, and redemption; and the comfort we find in the use and contemplation of them. These will be proper subjects of our conversation upon the sacred day, with our friends and families in private.

More especially *in his temple doth every man* (every religious man) *speak of his honour,‡* and *praise him in the great congregation.||* How excellent an example does holy David give us in this respect. *I was glad* (says he) *when they said*

* Mal. iii. 16.

† Col. iii. 16.

‡ Pf. xxix. 8.

|| Pf. xxvi. 12.

*unto me, we will go into the house of the Lord; for (says he, in another Psalm) one day in thy courts is better than a thousand; because, Blessed are they that dwell in thy house, they will be alway praising thee. There certainly shall every good man constantly resort, to the end that his glory may sing praise to God and not be silent; and there shall he say, O Lord my God, I will give thanks unto thee for ever.**

Let us now enquire what will be *the reward* of thus keeping the Sabbath.

First, the Prophet tells us—*then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord.* From what has been said, we see how necessary it is, that we learn to delight in the ordinances of God, before we can delight in God himself. The duty naturally leads to the reward. All the ordinances of God are indeed in themselves, favours, honours, and blessings; that of the Sabbath especially, by which he designs to promote our relish for *his company, in whose presence is life;*

* Pf. xxx. 13.

our delight in him, who is the inexhaustible fountain of peace and joy ; our esteem of *his* friendship, *who is able to do for us above all that we can ask or think.*

But I will not pretend to convey to your minds the full sense of this most gracious promise ; *for (says the inspired Prophet himself) since the beginning of the world, men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, besides thee, what thou hast prepared for him that waiteth for thee.** This seems to comprehend the final reward in the world to come : but even in this world (says the Prophet) *thou meetest him that rejoiceth, and worketh righteousness, those that remember thee in thy ways.* And how does God meet us in these his ways ? By being *in the midst of those, who are gathered together in his name :* “ He will be there (says “ Bishop Beveridge) in another manner than he “ is elsewhere, blessing what is done there, and “ those who do it ; *for in all places where I re-*

* Is. lxiv. 4, 5.

*“ cord my name (says God himself) I will come
 “ unto thee, and I will bless thee ;” by lifting up
 the light of his countenance upon us ; by filling our
 hearts with consolation, and good hope of his ac-
 ceptance through Jesus Christ ; by his spirit wit-
 nessing with our spirit that we are children of
 God ; by giving us that peace which the world
 can neither give nor take away, the peace of God,
 which passeth all understanding.*

But are there not some persons present, ready to say within themselves, “ and is this the great reward for so scrupulous an exactness in keeping the Sabbath ? I do not find it warm my heart, nor stimulate me to the laborious duty.” This is too sad a proof that you are not sufficiently acquainted with God ; and therefore take as little satisfaction in him, as you do in the visits and conversation of those with whom you are necessitated to keep up some formal intercourse. *O righteous Father, (exclaims the heavenly-minded Jesus) the world hath not known thee ! they know not their infinite obligations to thee,*

thee, nor thine ineffable love to them, therefore they cannot glorify thee, nor delight in thee: But to them who in their hearts draw near to God, to them he will more and more manifest himself as the delightful subject of their thoughts and meditations, and the delightful object of their best affections; till by the pious use of his Sabbaths upon earth, they are made meet to be partakers of the eternal glorious Sabbatism, which remaineth for the people of God in Heaven.*

And here the original word, which I have literally rendered *Sabbatism*, plainly intimates to us, that unless we can take pleasure in the due use of the Sabbath here, we could never enjoy Heaven, if we should arrive at it; for Heaven consists in an uninterrupted glorification of God, and spiritual enjoyment of him. If then we find within our souls nothing of this relish for the business of the Sabbath, we may well be startled, as a young lady I have heard of, once was, by opening a little book, in

which

* Heb. iv. 9.

which these lines (of a hymn describing Heaven) met her eyes,—

“Where congregations ne’er break up,
“And Sabbaths have no end*.”

She cried out, “Good God, then what shall
“I do there?” This conviction of her unqualified state, was (under divine grace) the occasion of her effectual resolution to obtain the necessary disposition. “We must, my brethren,
“carry a freight of heavenly mindedness with
“us into Heaven, or else Heaven will never
“be a *haven* of bliss to us.”

The second part of the reward is this,---*I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth.* This seems, in its literal meaning, to be a promise of temporal honour, extensive dominion, and secure possession of territories, to the seed of Jacob as a nation. If then the divine dispensations are at this day according to the patterns of things in the sacred records,---if as If-

* *Burkitt's Help and Guide to Christian Families*, which I earnestly recommend, especially to the poorer sort.

rael (when hypocritical in his fasts, and careless and profane in his Sabbaths) was deprived of this particular blessing,---does not the same God call us a people whose fasts and whose Sabbaths have been abused in like manner? For he seems to say to us, "Britons shall no more *ride* "in the high places of America." And tho' great thankfulness should attend the return of the great blessing of peace, and the cessation of human bloodshed, yet we cannot forbear making the mortifying reflection, what the British empire once was! More than ten tribes are revolted; Judah and Israel are alienated from each other, and become two separate nations.

Not that the Lord's hand was shortened that it could not save us from this dishonour; nor was his ear heavy, that it could not hear, when we fasted and prayed on this account: But our iniquities have separated between us and our God, and caused an irremediable dissention between us and our brethren; and our sins have hid his face from us that he would not hear, so as to reconcile*

* Is. lix. 1, 2.

concile and unite us again. Yet though *he has visited our sins with a rod, and our iniquities with scourges*, yet blessed be his goodness, *he has not utterly taken from us his loving kindness, nor suffered his faithful care of us to fail.* Instances of which are, *h^c putting an end to the raging and devouring fire of war, which was kindled against us on every side, and giving us rest from all our numerous and potent enemies round about; his making our fields now stand so thick with corn, that they seem indeed to laugh and sing; and his shewing us that he is ready (if our sins prevent him not) to pour us out blessings of various kinds, in such abundance, that there shall not be room enough to receive them.**

Let us then be admonished, and *sin no more, lest worse things come unto us than have yet befallen us; lest we experience what another prophet threatens; but if ye will not hearken unto me to hallow the Sabbath-day, and not to bear a burden even entering in at the gates of Jerusalem on the*

* Mal. iii. 10.

*Sabbath-day, then will I kindle a fire in the gates thereof, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem, and it shall not be quenched.**

If this promise has also a spiritual meaning, (which is reasonable to suppose, as the other two certainly have) it may suggest to us that conquest over the world through faith, that superior dignity of soul through grace; and that elevated hope through the due use of this divine ordinance, by which the truly religious man lives above the world, *sets his affections on heavenly, and not on earthly things*, and in all his prospects looks at, and advances towards the *everlasting hills*.†

Lastly, the due observers of the Sabbath are promised, that they shall be *fed with the heritage of Jacob their father*. Those to whom the Prophet addresses himself, either were in captivity in Babylon, or if they still inhabited Canaan, they did not *eat the good of the land, but it was devoured and desolated by strangers in their*

* Jer. xvii. 27.

† Gen. xlix. 26.

presence ;* so that it became in effect no Canaan to them ; it ceased to be *a land flowing with milk and honey, and the glory of all lands*,† such as was promised to the pious race of Jacob ; because they were now degenerated into a stupid inconsiderate ‡ *seed of evil doers*. Nevertheless, a restoration of them to their Canaan, or of their Canaan to its former perfection, is promised upon their due observance of the Sabbath. But, alas ! shall Britons ever be fed again with the heritage which their forefathers once possessed in America ? Or shall even the country, whose narrow bounds we now inhabit, be again blessed with all its former strength, and wealth, and commerce ?

The contempt which this nation shews towards all the divine ordinances, that of the Sabbath in particular, forbids us to entertain such a hope, so long as we retain such a character. Israel and Judah were never again united ; nor did the ten tribes ever return from their cap-

* If. i. 7.

† Ezek. xx. 6.

‡ If. i. 4.

tivity. But Judah likewise, in about a century afterwards,* was ruined as a nation.

This promise was annexed to the sanctification of the Sabbath, because the due use of this day to the honour of the great Creator, the one true God, would keep the Jews from worshipping *the Gods that made not the Heavens and the earth*,—during their captivity among an idolatrous people; and would tend to cultivate in them at all times, all those good dispositions, which would secure to them, that comprehensive *honour*, which God has promised to *them that honour him*; all divine blessings, public and private, temporal and eternal. *Eternal* I add; for that this promise intimated more than the compleatest enjoyments of an earthly Canaan, even to the seed of Israel according to the flesh, can hardly be doubted. The patriarchs *all died in faith, not having received this promise* in its

* One hundred and thirty three years. Compare the margin of your Bibles, 2 Kings, xviii. 10. with 2 Kings, xxv. 3, 4.

temporal sense; *they looked for a better country, that is, an heavenly.* And in this noblest sense, the Prophet addresses all true Israelites, all the spiritual seed of *faithful Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to the end of the world:* they are all seeking that Heaven, of which Canaan was but a type: and they seek it, by acquiring *here* the capacity of enjoying it *hereafter.* To which purpose the Sabbath is wisely and kindly adapted.

Indeed, they enjoy a foretaste of it *now:* the belief and expectation of Heaven afford the best sustenance, and the highest delight to the immortal soul, while on its journey towards it. So says the pious and excellent Dr. Watts,

“ The men of grace have found
 “ Glory begun below;
 “ Celestial fruits on earthly ground,
 “ From faith and hope may grow*.”

For *faith* (says the great Apostle) *is the evidence of things not seen; the substance of things hoped*

* Book ii. hymn 30.

for.† And *hope* is the *summum bonum*, or *chief good*, of this world to a humane creature; it is an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, entering within the veil of unseen eternity: it maketh not ashamed; it saves even now, all those who lay hold of it, from the confusion, perplexity, and disappointment which attend those, who, while they are tossed on “the waves of this troublesome world,” have all their treasure bound up in this poor uncertain life; who, neglecting the helm of faith, and the anchor of hope, are driven out into the boundless ocean of despair, where they at length make shipwreck of their bodies and souls at once; and then all their thoughts perish.

To conclude, “The ill success of nations, the misfortunes of individuals, the dissensions of statesmen, the quarrels of neighbours, the perplexities of councils, and the confusion of families, may be justly considered as the melancholy fruits of *irreligion* :” [the most fertile soil

* Heb. xi. 1.

of which baneful root, is,---*the profanation of the Sabbath.*] “ For as long as the blessed God, the giver of every good gift, and the fountain of mercy is *dishonoured*, neglected, and forgotten,---so long will it be unreasonable to expect either public or private happiness*.”

But on the other hand ; most *sure and steadfast* is the *hope* which all pious observers of the Sabbath build upon the threefold promise in my text. For *he is faithful* that has made it ; it proceeds from *God that cannot lie ; the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.*

Blessed, therefore, thrice blessed, is the man that doeth this, and layeth hold on it,---that keepeth the Sabbath from polluting it. Which that we may all do, and be both here, and for ever happy, God of his infinite mercy grant, thro’ the influence of his Holy Spirit our sanctifier,

* See a valuable Sermon preached at the assizes at Bristol, May 1783, by the Rev. Abraham Elton.

and

and for the sake of his blessed Son our Saviour; to whom, three persons, but one God, be glory, praise, and worship, now and ever more.

R U L E S.

and for the sake of his beloved Son our Saviour
our Father, who is the Father of all, but our Father
the God, Father, and Son, now and ever
Amen.

RULES

RULES FOR THE MANAGEMENT
OF THE
SUNDAY SCHOOLS
IN THE
PARISH OF STROUD.

I. **T**HE master [or dame] appointed by the subscribers, shall attend [at his or her own house] every Sunday morning, during the summer, from eight till half after ten; and every Sunday evening, during the summer, (except the second in every month) from half an hour after five till eight o'clock, to teach reading, the church catechism, and some short prayers from a little collection by Dr. Stonehouse; and also to read (or to have read by some of those who attend, if any can do it sufficiently) three or four chapters of the Bible in succession, that

G

people

people may have connected ideas of the history and consistency of the scriptures.

II. The persons to be taught are chiefly the young, who are past the usual age of admission to the weekly schools, and by being obliged to labour for their maintenance, cannot find time to attend them. But grown persons that cannot read, who are desirous of hearing God's word, and wish to learn that excellent short account of the faith and practice of a christian, the church catechism, are desired to attend, and endeavour to learn, by hearing the younger taught and instructed.

III. Some of the subscribers will in turn visit these schools, to see that their design is duly pursued; and give some little reward to the first, second, and third most deserving in each school.

IV. The subscribers will keep a blank book, in which shall be entered the names of all those
parents

parents, and other persons, who, having need of these helps, neglect to send their children, or to attend; and of those who behave improperly when they attend; with intent that they may be excluded from the alms and other charitable assistance of the benevolent. Those, who will take no care of their own souls, deserve not that others should take care for their bodies.

V. All that attend these schools, shall, as much as may be, attend the public worship both morning and afternoon on Sunday; and shall assemble at church on the second evening of every month at six o'clock, to be examined, and to hear a plain exposition of the catechism, which the minister will endeavour to give them.

From a due attention to these articles, it is hoped and believed (with the divine blessing) will arise in the minds of those, who observe them, some concern for their immortal souls,
which,

which, without the knowledge of and obedience to God's will, must perish everlastingly; a habit of reverence for the Sabbath; and a willingness to attend the public worship in a regular and devout manner.

Some sincere friends of religion, supposing that the foregoing rules might find their way beyond the limits of the parish, for the use of which they were framed, advised to subjoin an account and explanation of them; wishing they may furnish some hints to persons disposed to establish Schools of this nature in other places.

AS soon as the writer was apprized of the beneficial effects of Sunday-Schools, as conducted at GLOCESTER, he perceived they would tend at once to lessen his Sunday evening's labour of teaching, examining, and instructing the poor children of his parish in the church-catechism, and to render it more effectual. The
 proposal

propofal was no fooner made, than it met with the approbation and affiftance of a few individuals, and four of thefe Schools were opened in this parifh in May and June laft. The number of perfons who attend them is about 140.

There have been for many years in this parifh weekly fchools, fupported by fubfcription, and an annual charity fermon. The children who attend thefe are about 130. Yet many were the young perfons who had been prevented, or had neglected, or otherwife loft the benefit of thefe fchools.

The Sunday Schools were therefore juftly efteemed a neceffary fupplement to the former inftitution; and by means of both, it may be hoped, that no one among us will remain long unpoftelled of the ability to read the word of God for himfelf, which ought to be the privilege (nay, is the right) of every perfon born and bred in a Chriftian country.

As an early habit of reverencing and rightly using the Sabbath must be laid in the rising generation, as one of the foundation-stones of that reformation devoutly wished for by all serious persons, the attendance on public worship is particularly insisted on. To promote which, some of the rewards to be given are the most necessary articles of apparel; and thro' the failure of the clothing manufacture in this county, these are wanting to many who do, and to more that would, attend these schools. This, it is hoped, will be looked upon as a sufficient apology for setting the price of one shilling on so small a tract.

Some of the children, who are brought up to other communions, are enjoined to attend their respective places of worship constantly and devoutly, and required to give an account of the preacher's text.

The other rewards are Bibles of different sizes, New Testaments, Dr. Stonehouse's "Prayers
ers

ers for private persons, families, &c." mentioned, rule the 1st, " Admonitions against swearing, sabbath-breaking, and drunkenness," catechisms, and papers of hymns.

The time before divine service in the morning is employed in *learning* to spell and read. The reading in the evening is performed by those who can read fluently, as it is intended for the edification of all. The rules are read every Sunday evening as soon as the children are assembled. After reading three, four, or five chapters of the Bible (more or less, as the connexion of the passage may require) the prayers are repeated. The youngest are taught first Dr. Watts's short prayers, pages 42 and 43 of the above-mentioned collection; when they are perfect in these, they learn the additions to them; and persons of more advanced age learn the longer prayers of Bishop Wilson and Bishop Gibson. While one is speaking aloud the prayer, or answer of the catechism, all the rest are required to repeat the
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same

same in a whisper ; by which, inattention and trifling are in a great measure prevented, and a rapid progress is made in fixing what is to be learned in the memory. The minister and some of the subscribers attend one of these Schools every Sunday evening, and make such familiar observations on the scripture and catechism as they think adapted to such young minds.

The most deficient scholars attend one or two other evenings in the week, for about two hours, at the house of the master or dame.

The teachers are sober, serious persons, whose conscientious assiduity may be depended on, and whose indigent circumstances make the moderate pay of one shilling per Sunday an acceptable recompence.

The benefits which may accrue to the persons thus taught, considered as creatures made for eternal happiness or misery, constitute an argument

ment for these institutions to every religious mind, to which it is needless to attempt to add more weight. And let those, who are not disposed to attend to *this* argument, revolve in their minds the improved comforts of society, which must arise from a lively sense of decency, honesty, fidelity, gratitude, submission, and regularity, universally inculcated in the minds of the poorer sort of people. Will it not make them more honest and dutiful servants, more faithful husbands and wives, more careful and affectionate fathers and mothers? Will it not give to the inferior class of people that desirable respect for themselves, which makes them prefer the earning their own subsistence, to cringing for relief to the burthened estates of their superiors? Will it not dispose them contentedly and chearfully to get their own living, and to do their duty in whatever state of life it shall please God to place them? And let humanity enquire, whether it will not tend to thin our crowded prisons, to shorten the long black calendar of criminals

at our affizes, and to silence that well known reproachful accusation of a Christian country, uttered by almost every malefactor at the fatal tree,—*that he owes his ruin to his not being educated in a due observation of the Sabbath.*

If these queries receive but this answer, “that probably such good effects may arise from these institutions,” it is a sufficient reason why every one, who regards his own interest chiefly, should concur in supporting them, with those who act on more extended views.

F I N I S.

